

For more than a century, the Iron Range has prospered from the wealth of its land. Indeed, all northeastern Minnesota has prospered from vast natural resources. We have logged, we have farmed, we have mined...for real wealth comes only from the land. All the while we have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with arguably the greatest fresh water port on earth. That relationship continues today, for what is important to Duluth is important to greater St. Louis County and what is important to St. Louis County is important to the regional center of the greater Duluth area.

As we join together here in yet another regional center, the port of St. Paul, which serves the rich natural resources of greater Minnesota, we come together focused on those things important to our region. Northeastern Minnesota, the Iron Range, and the port of Duluth have a history as distinguished as the people who lived it. The mines of the Iron Range provided the raw materials to the industrial machine of the United States of America that outproduced the axis nations combined by greater than five to one. That "industrial might" empowered the brave men and women of what is commonly referred to as our nation's greatest generation to simply overpower Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and the Empire of Japan. Though, but a footnote in history. Without the rich natural resources of Minnesota's Iron Range, without the vision of those entrepreneurs that connected those resources to the industrial centers of the east through the port of Duluth. The outcome may have been very different.

This nation has tried isolationism and we even tried prohibition. That worked pretty well. Today we need special legislation to permit the Stillwater bridge, but not for the iron to build it. We stop the bus to build the Viking's stadium, but not for the raw materials necessary for construction. If we cannot mine here in Minnesota with American workers and technology, then we cannot and should not mine anywhere in the world. Today our region is again at the forefront, a true bright spot in difficult economic times for this state and this nation.

With elected officials who have the vision to see and the courage to lead, the next generation of mining in nonferrous has the potential to lead this state, this nation to a sustainable position at the forefront in our global economy. True wealth comes from the land. Without natural resources we cannot experience the industrial and manufacturing renaissance our nation needs to compete and to lead.

Governor Dayton, legislative leaders, Mayor Ness, community leaders, our future lies in the land, so rich, a heritage so deep that we must persist. With your help, with the energy in this room, northeastern Minnesota will continue to be a bright spot for our nation's economy, for our way of life.

Go ahead, hug a Ranger!